THE

WORLD.

NUMBER C.

By *ADAM FITZ-ADAM.*

To be continued every THURSDAY.

THURSDAY, *November* the 28th, 1754.

I HEARD the other day with great pleaſure from my worthy friend Mr. Dodſley, that Mr. Johnſon's Engliſh dictionary, with a grammar and hiſtory of our language prefixed, will be publiſhed this winter, in two large volumes in folio.

I HAD long lamented that we had no lawful ſtandard of our language ſet up, for thoſe to repair to, who might chuſe to ſpeak and write it grammatically and correctly: and I have as long wiſhed that either ſome one perſon of diſtinguiſhed abilities would undertake the work ſingly, or that a certain number of gentlemen would form themſelves, or be formed by the government, into

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a ſociety for that purpoſe. The late ingenious doctor Swift propoſed a plan of this nature to his friend (as he thought him) the lord treaſurer Oxford, but without ſucceſs; preciſion and perſpicuity not being in general the favourite objects of miniſters, and perhaps ſtill leſs ſo of that miniſter than of any other.

MANY people have imagined that ſo extenſive a work would have been beſt performed by a number of perſons, who ſhould have taken their ſeveral departments, of examining, ſifting, winnowing (I borrow this image from the Italian *cruſca*) purifying, and finally fixing our language, by incorporating their reſpective funds into one joint ſtock. But whether this opinion be true or falſe, I think the public in general, and the republic of letters in particular, greatly obliged to Mr. Johnſon, for having undertaken and executed ſo great and deſireable a work. Perfection is not to be expected from man; but if we are to judge by the various works of Mr. Johnſon, already publiſhed, we have good reaſon to believe that he will bring this as near to perfection as any one man could do. The plan of it, which he publiſhed ſome years ago, ſeems to me to be a proof of it. Nothing can be more rationally imagined, or more accurately and elegantly expreſſed. I therefore recommend the previous peruſal of it to all thoſe who intend to buy the dictionary, and who, I ſuppoſe, are all thoſe who can afford it.

THE celebrated dictionaries of the Florentine and French academies owe their preſent ſize and perfection to very ſmall beginnings. Some private gentlemen at Florence, and ſome at Paris, had met at each others houſes to talk over and conſider their reſpective languages; upon which they publiſhed ſome ſhort eſſays, which eſſays were the embrio's of thoſe perfect productions, that now do ſo much honour to the

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two nations. Even Spain, which ſeems not to be the ſoil where, of late at leaſt, letters have either proſpered or been cultivated, has produced a dictionary, and a good one too, of the Spaniſh language, in ſix large volumes in folio.

I CANNOT help thinking it a ſort of diſgrace to our nation, that hitherto we have had no ſuch ſtandard of our language; our dictionaries at preſent being more properly what our neighbours the Dutch and the Germans call theirs, WORD-BOOKS, than dictionaries in the ſuperior ſenſe of that title. All words, good and bad, are there jumbled indiſcriminately together, inſomuch that the injudicious reader may ſpeak and write as inelegantly, improperly and vulgarly as he pleaſes, by and with the authority of one or other of our WORD-BOOKS.

IT muſt be owned that our language is at preſent in a ſtate of anarchy; and hitherto, perhaps, it may not have been the worſe for it. During our free and open trade, many words and expreſſions have been imported, adopted and naturalized from other languages, which have greatly enriched our own. Let it ſtill preſerve what real ſtrength and beauty it may have borrowed from others, but let it not, like the Tarpeian maid, be overwhelmed and cruſhed by unneceſſary foreign ornaments. The time for diſcrimination ſeems to be now come. Toleration, adoption and naturalization have run their lengths. Good order and authority are now neceſſary. But where ſhall we find them, and at the ſame time, the obedience due to them? We muſt have recourſe to the old Roman expedient in times of confuſion, and chuſe a dictator. Upon this principle I give my vote for Mr. Johnſon to fill that great and arduous poſt. And I hereby declare that I make a total ſurrender of all my rights and privileges in the Engliſh language, as a free-born

born Britiſh ſubject, to the ſaid Mr. Johnſon, during the term of his dictatorſhip. Nay more; I will not only obey him, like an old Roman, as my dictator, but, like a modern Roman, I will implicitly believe in him as my pope, and hold him to be infallible while in the chair; but no longer. More than this he cannot well require; for I preſume that obedience can never be expected when there is neither terror to enforce, nor intereſt to invite it.

I CONFESS that I have ſo much honeſt Engliſh pride, or perhaps, prejudice about me, as to think myſelf more conſiderable for whatever contributes to the honour, the advantage, or the ornament of my native country. I have therefore a ſenſible pleaſure in reflecting upon the rapid progreſs which our language has lately made, and ſtill continues to make, all over Europe. It is frequently ſpoken, and almoſt univerſally underſtood, in Holland; it is kindly entertained as a relation in the moſt civilized parts of Germany; and it is ſtudied as a learned language, though yet little ſpoke, by all thoſe in France and Italy, who either have, or pretend to have, any learning.

THE ſpreading the French language over moſt parts of Europe, to the degree of making it almoſt a univerſal one, was always reckoned among the glories of the reign of Lewis the fourteenth. But be it remembered that the ſucceſs of his arms firſt opened the way to it, though at the ſame time it muſt be owned, that a great number of moſt excellent authors who flouriſhed in his time, added ſtrength and velocity to it's progreſs. Whereas our language has made it's way ſingly by it's own weight and merit, under the conduct of thoſe great leaders, Shakeſpear, Bacon, Milton, Locke, Newton, Swift, Pope, Addiſon, &c. A nobler ſort of conqueſt, and a far

far more glorious triumph, ſince graced by none but willing captives!

THESE authors, though for the moſt part but indifferently tranſlated into foreign languages, gave other nations a ſample of the Britiſh genius. The copies, imperfect as they were, pleaſed, and excited a general deſire of ſeeing the originals; and both our authors and our language ſoon became claſſical.

BUT a grammar, a dictionary, and a hiſtory of our language through it's ſeveral ſtages were ſtill wanting at home, and importunately called for from abroad. Mr. Johnſon's labours will now, and, I dare ſay, very fully, ſupply that want, and greatly contribute to the farther ſpreading of our language in other countries. Learners were diſcouraged by finding no ſtandard to reſort to, and conſequently thought it incapable of any. They will now be undeceived and encouraged.

THERE are many hints and conſiderations relative to our language, which I ſhould have taken the liberty of ſuggeſting to Mr. Johnſon, had I not been convinced that they have equally occurred to him: but there is one, and a very material one it is, to which perhaps he may not have given all the neceſſary attention. I mean the genteeler part of our language, which owes both it's riſe and progreſs to my fair countrywomen, whoſe natural turn is more to the copiouſneſs, than to the correctneſs of diction. I would not adviſe him to be raſh enough to proſcribe any of thoſe happy redundancies and luxuriancies of expreſſion, with which they have enriched our language. They willingly inflict fetters, but very unwillingly ſubmit to wear them. In this caſe his taſk will be ſo difficult, that I deſign as a common friend, to propoſe in ſome future paper the means which appear to me the moſt likely to reconcile matters.